

PLANNING BOARD STAFF REPORT

DATE: July 11, 2011

TO: HONORABLE PRESIDENT AND MEMBERS OF THE
PLANNING BOARD

FROM: Laura Ajello, Planner II
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APPLICATION: **PLN10-0362 – 701 Atlantic Avenue – Planned Development Amendment and Design Review.** The City of Alameda Housing Authority proposes to amend its 1988 Planned Development Agreement to allow a 600 square foot one story addition to an existing office building.

ZONING DISTRICT: R-5-PD, General Residential District, Planned Development Combining District

GENERAL PLAN: Medium Density Residential

ACRONYMS: FDP - Final Development Plan
PDA - Planned Development Amendment

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The City of Alameda Housing Authority proposes an alteration to the design of their existing office building. The proposal would create approximately 600 square feet on the ground floor of the building by partially infilling the covered patio structure at the building entrance. This area faces the parking lot, since it is already covered by a roof structure, the lot coverage and setback measurements remain unchanged. Under both the current parking regulations and those in effect at the time of the submittal, no increase to the number of parking spaces is required. Staff recommends approval of the Planned Development Amendment and Design Review applications with a condition to maintain a small amount of landscaping along the building perimeter and under the covered patio.

BACKGROUND

Independence Plaza senior housing complex spans nearly an entire super block, with the Housing Authority office positioned on the corner of Atlantic Avenue and Constitution Way. According to the 1989 Final Development Plan staff report, this development is covered under a Mitigated Negative Declaration, IS-88-4.

A Planned Development overlay, PD-88-3, was approved by the Planning Board in 1988 for a 186-unit senior housing complex, 172 parking spaces, and a two-story office building to house the City of Alameda Housing Authority. In February of 1989 the City Council approved Final Development Plan FD-88-10 (a.k.a. Master Plan). Figures for reduced required yards and lot coverage are not clearly documented in the resulting City of Alameda Resolutions but instead are specified by the location of the approved office building site, only 5-feet from the city sidewalk.

For funding reasons the Housing Authority's administrative office building was split from the senior housing complex by dividing the 5.01 acre lot into two lots (4.73 acres and .28 acres). As seen in Figure 1, a detail taken from the survey submitted by the applicant, new property lines were drawn closely around the office building, which now covers nearly the entire 90-foot by 121-foot parcel.

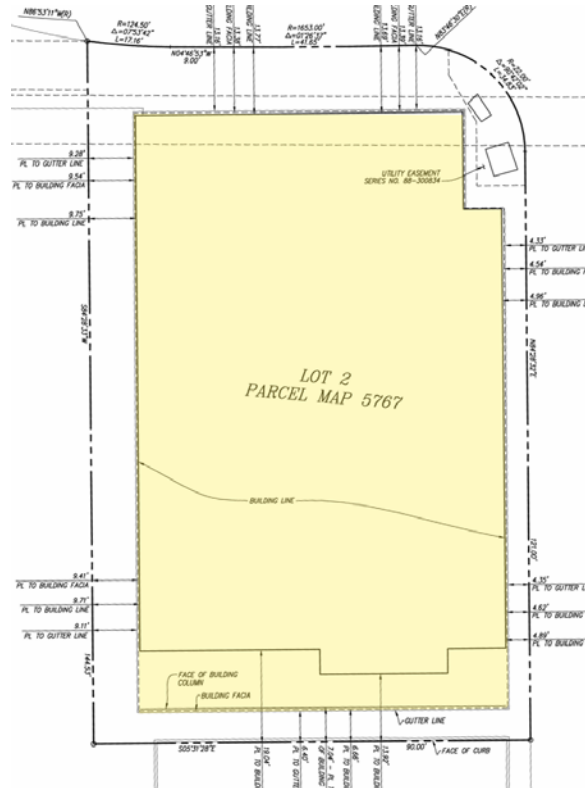


Figure 1: Roof area shown in yellow, property lines shown as dashed black line

Surrounding Land Uses

The zoning designations for the properties surrounding the site range from R-4, Neighborhood Residential District to M-1-PD, Intermediate Industrial (Manufacturing) District, Planned Development Combining District.

- North: Residential
- South: Independence Plaza surface parking lots (the College of Alameda is located across Webster Street)
- West: Independence Plaza senior housing complex
- East: Commercial (Webster Square Shopping Center)

STAFF ANALYSIS

Zoning Code Conformance

As shown in the table below, the project complies with all of the development standards of the original approved office building. Pursuant to the Alameda Municipal Code, the front yard of a corner lot is the yard adjacent to the shorter street frontage, Constitution Way in this case.

Description	AMC Standard for R-5	Project Measure as Built	Proposed Change
Front Setback	20 Feet	5 Feet	None
Side Yard Setbacks	10' street side / 5'	4.89' (left) / 9.71' (right)	None
Rear Yard Setback	20 Feet	7 Feet	None
Lot Coverage	50%	74%	None
Building Height	40 Feet	25.5 Feet	None

Site and Building Design

The site is located at the southern border of the Webster Street Gateway District as outlined in the 2010 Webster Street Vision plan. It is zoned R-5-PD and has excellent access to public transit and other amenities. Independence Plaza is comprised of five residential buildings with 186 rental units and one two-story office building used by the Housing Authority for administrative and maintenance use.

The proposed addition will create additional office space and interview rooms. It will be created by filling-in a large portion of the covered patio that faces a parking area, as shown in Figures 2 and 3. The covered patio area has no outdoor seating but it does contain two small landscaped areas. No replacement landscaping is proposed. Much of the limited space on this lot not covered by structures is used for walkways to the adjacent parking areas.

The addition is designed to blend with the existing architecture of the building. Siding materials and new windows will match existing elements. The streetscape



Figure 2: Adjacent Parking Area



Figure 3: Project Area

will not be affected by this small addition. Minor recommended changes, such as preserving a portion of the existing landscaping along the south side of the building (facing Atlantic Avenue) and reconstructing a small landscape area under the remaining covered patio are included in the draft resolution as conditions of approval and can be reviewed at staff level.



Figure 4: 2010 Bird's eye View of 701 Atlantic Ave

PLANNED DEVELOPMENT FINDINGS

The Planning Board may approve a Planned Development (PD) application only if it determines:

1. **The Planned Development zoning designation is consistent with the General Plan.** The Medium-Density Residential General Plan designation does not specify locations for administrative office use. However, the use is consistent with R-5, General Residential District zoning and the Planned Development agreement, FDP-88-10 (Planning Board Resolution No. 1932), that govern this site. Therefore, the continuation of the existing office use is consistent with the General Plan.
2. **The location of the proposed use is compatible with other land uses in the general neighborhood area.** The Planning Board previously approved the final development plan and subdivision for this site in 1988 and 1989. At that time, the use was found compatible with the other land uses in the area, which included (and still includes) institutional and commercial uses. No change to the existing use is proposed. The amendment to allow modification of the office building provides for a more effective use of the building and is designed to meet the current needs of the applicant.
3. **The proposal, if it complies with all conditions upon which approval is made contingent, will not adversely affect other property in the vicinity.** The proposal consists of a minor addition to an existing office building; no increase in intensity of use is proposed. The original conditions of approval shall remain in effect. These conditions address construction restrictions, parking and traffic impacts. Since the original PD was approved the surrounding areas have been developed with additional residential uses, which is compatible with administrative offices of nonprofit community social service organizations.

DESIGN REVIEW FINDINGS

Staff suggests the following findings for approval of the design review application:

1. The proposed design is consistent with the General Plan, Zoning Ordinance, and the City of Alameda Design Review Manual.
2. The proposed design is appropriate for the site, is compatible with adjacent or neighboring buildings or surroundings, and promotes harmonious transitions in scale and character in areas between different designated land uses.
3. The proposed design of the structure and exterior materials and landscaping are visually compatible with the surrounding development, and design elements have been incorporated to ensure the compatibility of the structure with the character and uses of adjacent development.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

The project is exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to the CEQA guideline section 15301 – Existing Facilities.

PUBLIC NOTICE

A notice for this hearing was mailed to property owners and residents within 300 feet of this site, published in the Alameda Journal and posted at the subject property. Staff has not received any public comments on this project as of June 28, 2011.

RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the Planning Board find the project exempt from further review under CEQA pursuant to guideline section 15301; and approve Planned Development Amendment and Design Review, application number PLN10-0362.

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED BY:

REVIEWED BY:

LAURA AJELLO
PLANNER II

MARGARET KAVANAUGH-LYNCH
PLANNING SERVICES MANAGER

Attachments:

1. Resolution
2. Project Plans
3. Parcel Map